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Encountering Asian Art through Joint Faculty-Student Field Research and Museum Curatorship: Ignatian Parallels

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Abstract

The early Jesuits placed the arts at the center of their pedagogy and worldview. Taking cues from such Ignatian teachings on crossing cultural boundaries with respect and humility, and on the an emphasis on the centrality of art in human life, this article reports on a recent ethnographic fieldwork-based encounter with the Balinese arts, specifically ritual textile dyeing and weaving in the village of Tenganan Pegeringsingan, east Bali. This fieldwork on geringsing ceremonial cloth went toward a small college exhibition at the College of the Holy Cross in Spring 2011, an exhibition designed to skewer some of the more popular, touristic, fabulist clichés about “Balinese culture” as paradise-like and timeless. The exhibition display design decisions are described and show how these resonate with Ignatian parallels regarding teaching through the arts. The fieldwork and exhibition illustrate how the early Jesuit appreciation for distant societies and the arts can be modeled in inventive, multidisciplinary ways in Jesuit liberal arts college curricula today.

Introduction

In the ideal, undergraduate education at Jesuit colleges and universities has an intellectual seriousness and boldness to it that is distinctive. Engagement with the arts¹ as a central part of undergraduate education is also characteristic of Jesuit institutions,² as is (again in the ideal) a sustained openness to cultural worlds quite distant from the student’s own home universe. In the United States, a particular receptivity to encountering the cultures of Asia, Native America, and Latin America can also be a leitmotif of Jesuit college learning and teaching, where staffing levels allow. As John W. O’Malley notes in *The First Jesuits*, the earliest companions of Ignatius and their immediate successors traveled to these world areas for mission but in the process of

encouraging conversion, some of them listened with care to the subtle societies that they were encountering.³ They learned lessons in humility, for some early Jesuits were flexible enough to recognize and sometimes respect immense cultural and historical complexity in places like Asia, when they encountered it. Some saw this openness to other world cultures as concordant with the Ignatian ethos of finding God in all things.⁴

As O’Malley writes, although many 16th and 17th century Jesuit efforts at school establishment and catechism instruction in India and Brazil (for instance) “smack[ed] of paternalism and a misguided sense of European cultural superiority, with all their attendant evils, they were not engaged in by the Jesuits without some feeling of mutuality, and they contrast with the attitudes and



Figure 1. Pak Kadek and his wife holding a large-scale geringsing, in their house compound, Tenganan Dauh Tukad, July 2010. Pak Kadek is a tour guide, lontar plam calendar artist, and heritage entrepreneur and his wife weaves geringsing and dries and sells spices.

practices of many other Europeans who had settled in these places.”⁵ The early Jesuits in China are a case in point: Fr. Matteo Ricci and his colleagues who journeyed to the Forbidden City in the sixteenth century were seeking vast numbers of new converts in the empire, without doubt. This can certainly be construed as a component of European colonial expansion in Asia. However, by approaching the imperial court with a degree of respect, humility, and good humor, and by wielding the prototypical early Jesuit tools of books and scientific turns of mind, Fr. Ricci and his missionary companions fostered a remarkable institutional and intellectual climate of exchange between China and the West, albeit for a brief time.⁶ All this, in an era when many other Europeans saw China in clichéd, fabulist terms and had little interest in pushing beyond such barriers.

The Ignatian ambition of purpose, the Jesuit appreciation of the arts as foundational to cultures and to pedagogy, and this sense that encounters with other cultures should have a quality of mutuality and open-hearted respect to them can be modeled in the here-and-now in Jesuit liberal arts college curricula. In this article, we give a

recent example of this by discussing a joint faculty/student fieldwork-based project in Bali, Indonesia that we carried out in summer 2010. Our work was nothing if not ambitious—and, we contend, Ignatian. We went to Hindu Bali not to missionize by any means or stretch of the imagination but to encounter Balinese arts with some seriousness, and to then employ that fieldwork experience to teach others back on the Holy Cross campus a few small lessons about contemporary Asia, and about overcoming clichés.

A Fieldwork Plan, an Exhibition Framework

Our work concerned Balinese art, specifically ritual textiles (**Figures 1, 2**). The early Jesuits’ contention that instruction in the arts should be central to curricula in the Jesuit schools and also to Jesuit formation resonated with us with insights from recent sociocultural anthropology. That field asserts that dance, vernacular architecture, song, and the figural arts provide a society with some of their densest (if most oblique) forms of symbolic representation for defining and reproducing ethos and worldview. For anthropologists, following Emile Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*,⁷ symbolic formations in these ranges of aesthetic action



Figure 2. Geringsing is woven on a back tension loom, as shown here, Tenganan Dauh Tukad, July 2010.

represent, by continually *re-presenting* for each generation, core social structural templates.

In his work on Bali itself, anthropologist Clifford Geertz went on in his well-known essay “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”⁸ to suggest that art gives inhabitants of a culture a compelling field of play within which to discover their own, and their society’s, deepest subjectivities. As we shall explain below, certain Balinese textiles have this character.

Our work overall had three stages. In summer 2010 Rodgers (an anthropology professor specializing in the study of Indonesian literatures and arts⁹ at Holy Cross) and Cumella (then a Class of 2011 Holy Cross English major and Asian Studies Concentrator) travelled to Indonesia for a month of fieldwork to interview weavers and heritage goods entrepreneurs in Tenganan Pegeringsingan, East Bali (**Figure 3, Figure 4**). This cluster of three contiguous villages is famous for producing an extremely rare form of handwoven sacred cloth called *geringsing*.¹⁰ This

handspun cotton fabric employs a challenging, unusual dyeing technique called double ikat. In this form of traditional cloth production, both the warp *and* the weft threads are painstakingly tied-dyed into intricate patterns before the yarns are removed from frames, plunged into natural dye baths, and then woven on back-tension looms. The tie-dyeing of tiny segments of the threads



Figure 3. Robin Cumella talking with Pak Kadek in a fieldwork interview, July 2010.



Figure 4. Tenganan Dauh Tukad, July 2010.

must be done with precision so that the eventual geometric designs that emerge on the growing cloth on the loom can be accurately rendered. Asian ikat cloth production much more typically uses single ikat technology, where only the warps or the wefts are dyed into patterns (**Figure 5**). In Indonesia, double ikat is produced only in this one small village cluster in east Bali. This technology may date to the 10th or 11th century, to trade contacts and religious exchanges with north India.

Research on international art worlds (where geringsing figure as prestigious acquisitions for elite collectors and museums) and studies of the construction of “art” and “tradition” in Euroamerica and in the so-called developing world informed our fieldwork.¹¹ Geringsing in the first instance are produced for ceremonial uses for Balinese families throughout the island. The cloths serve as magically protective devices that cast off evil in times of special vulnerability and harm, in the lives of both individuals and communities. For instance, geringsing protect the body and spiritual integrity of adolescents



Figure 5. This man is tying in patterns onto threads on a frame, as an early step toward making endek, a single ikat cloth of east Bali. Sidemen, Bali, July 2010.

undergoing what are deemed to be hazardous times of transition from childhood to sexual maturity. In the Tenganan villages themselves, geringsing as ritual costume protect community and cosmic order and help right the balance between good and evil. However, beyond this, geringsing have also long been hot commodities in international textile art collecting circles, as a sort of *piece de resistance* special cloth acquisition that can cap off a fine collection of Southeast Asian textiles. In other words, this is a sacred cloth that has been part of globalized markets since at least the 1920s.

Tourism has brought further globalization of this fabric (**Figure 6**). This is a process in which Tenganan cloth producers and sellers have been active and canny agents. Geringsing cloths today are undergoing forceful and often monetarily profitable processes of ideological reformulation as sellable items to travelers. This has occurred as east Balinese craft villages interact with worldwide

heritage tourism. The east Balinese geringsing weaving villages occupy a distinct status within Balinese tourism, since the Tenganan settlements produce this unique cloth type. Village promoters market the settlements as having distinctly “ancient” Balinese arts, shown in the geringsing itself and in Tenganan ceremonial processions and mock-combat ritual battles. There, combatants are attired in layers of geringsing.

Beyond even this, east Balinese village dyers and weavers from this one village cluster are now positioning themselves as Ur-traditional within Bali’s overall fascination with “being modern.”¹² In the island as a whole, the latter takes the form of boosterish economic development projects sponsored by the national government. Bali’s intense tourism industry undergirds these infrastructural changes, which include highway development, rural electrification, and so on. The Tenganan weaving villages, by contrast, taboo cars inside the village walls, delimit hotel construction there, and try to maintain a thoroughly archaic look to village layout and house architecture. Geringsing textile hand production works as an icon of tradition here.

All this occurs within national Indonesian contexts and in reaction to Indonesian and international discourses about the modern and how it relates to the “authentically traditional.” Rendering the situation more complicated still is the fact that Bali is largely Hindu whereas the rest of the Indonesian nation is approximately 90% Muslim. Geringsing hand production and sale are tightly entangled with Balinese claims throughout the island about the supposed cultural authenticity and purported ancientness of the “Indic” Balinese arts (derived from contacts with India and Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms in Java starting in the 10th century).

There are ironies here: the geringsing producing villages are closely associated with the Bali Aga people,¹³ who claim to be an extremely old autochthonous community that predates the island’s interactions with Java’s Hindu-Buddhist royal court civilizations many centuries ago. Geringsing cloths are touted by some Bali Aga elites in the Tenganan settlements as living proof of their community’s unique historical lineage as Bali’s “original people.”



Figure 6. A young man selling lontar palm augury calendars, etchings, and decorated eggs to tourists, Tenganan Pegeringsingan, Bali, July 2010.

What happens to “traditional village textiles” in such fraught contexts of nationhood, far-flung arts markets and collecting worlds, religious difference, economic globalization, claims of cultural authenticity, tourism markets, and ideological shifts toward “the modern” in regions of the world with large stakes in appearing pristinely traditional? We asked these questions in early summer 2010 in designing our brief fieldwork and preparing for it through four weeks of intensive reading of the scholarly literature on these themes, on campus. We felt that a complex theoretical framework of this sort would allow us to hear and *see* more of Balinese artistic realities, as textile worlds that are undergoing transformations along numerous dimensions.

Our project was by no means full-scale ethnographic fieldwork, which would have demanded at least a year of residence in Bali—impossible given Cumella’s schedule of graduating from college on time. However, our short encounter with Bali was designed to be as open-ended and exploratory as possible as a college study trip, to let us see some of the ambiguities and ideological and aesthetic contradictions of the *geringsing* trade, now obviously a “tradition” on the move. We needed an approach that was flexible, open to cultural complexity, and reactive to conditions “on the ground” that might surprise us and go against the conventional views of Bali—in other words, we needed to take a page from the early Jesuits’ book.

In our fieldwork we also took our cues from sociocultural anthropology’s long history of careful ethnographic research methodology. That is, we kept daily fieldwork diaries, took copious notes from observations and interviews, held nightly discussions to continually refine our interview questions, and took many photographs of weaving processes and marketing scenes. We relied on Rodgers’ fluency in Indonesian, the national language, for most of our interactions with *geringsing* dyers, weavers, and sellers. Rodgers served as a simultaneous translator for Cumella for our interviews, since Cumella had not yet acquired fluency in Bahasa Indonesia (and Holy Cross does not teach that language). Longer fieldwork would doubtless have demanded that we both study the Balinese language and that Cumella also gain fluency in Bahasa Indonesia, as

most people on Bali are bilingual. In the fieldwork Rodgers took care to record Balinese phrases from cloth production discussions and then translate them into Indonesian for herself and into English for Cumella. All of our interlocutors in the Tenganan villages were fluent in Bahasa Indonesia (the main medium of instruction in the national public schools).

After our summer research, we returned to campus and spent the fall 2010 semester writing a short catalogue together. This was entitled, “*Geringsing* in Transition: A Balinese Textile on the Move.”¹⁴ This was largely a fieldwork report and we used it to highlight the rather unexpected discoveries that we made about several aspects of contemporary *geringsing* production that ran quite counter to the published scholarship about this remarkable double ikat cloth.

This booklet accompanied part three of our encounter with Balinese arts: a small exhibition that we jointly curated of the *geringsing* cloths that we had purchased in east Bali from weaving houses and from some of the weavers we had interviewed (**Figure 7**). These cloths were displayed along with several related ikat textiles from Holy Cross’s extensive study collection of Southeast Asian textiles.

This exhibition was an unusual one for Holy Cross in that it was located in the hallway outside the college art gallery and not in the gallery itself. This hallway space is now being increasingly devoted to joint student/faculty research projects on the arts. Our modest exhibition was designed



Figure 7. View of the “*Geringsing* in Transition” hallway exhibition, Holy Cross, spring 2011.

to invite the entire campus community (anyone who might walk through this busy, mundane campus hallway leading to administrative offices) to savor this one small sector of Asian fabric art for a moment or two. Beyond that hopefully pleasurable aesthetic experience, however, we also designed the exhibition's displays of *geringsing*, wall text panels, and photographs (from our fieldwork) to invite visitors to encounter and even interrogate Asian art more deeply, through some of the theoretical lenses mentioned above.

In addition, through our focus on our fieldwork discoveries in designing the exhibition (as opposed to simply providing summaries of the standard scholarship there) and also by displaying a notably unconventional *geringsing* (oddly, an indigo blue one about which the literature was totally silent), we sought to give exhibition-goers anti-canonical ways of seeing this textile type. We invited hallway visitors to see *geringsing* weaving and marketing as a field of ideological contestation that is now operating in lively ways in relation to many players. These stretched in social location from the craft villages, to the arts town of Ubud, to Bali as a whole, to Indonesia as a nation, to international venues such as the Holy Cross art gallery spaces themselves. We wanted to unsettle our readers and exhibition visitors in their visions of *geringsing*; we sought to de-center their assumption that in considering textiles from Bali they were seeing Bali alone. We wanted contemporary social realities of *geringsing* worlds to push past the standard scholarship. The early Jesuits' insistence that one must remain flexible and open-minded in "journeys to the East" made a great deal of sense to us, in this context.

We further explored these ideas in a series of noontime gallery walk-throughs, which we narrated together. These 30 minute informal lecture tours of the exhibition shifted among several overarching themes (for instance, globalization and the commodification of ritual textiles; heritage cloth and tourism). Some tours were targeted to specific campus audiences (first year seminars in Holy Cross's Montserrat program; anthropology and sociology classes; Asian Studies introductory courses; faculty and staff). Other walk-throughs were open to all and we adjusted our talking points to which people happened to show up at noon.

In designing the hallway show and planning our walk-through talks, we knew we would have to confront major issues of cliché-mongering, since Bali was at issue. The island and its well-known arts of gamelan music, court dances, Indic dance drama (and now, internationalized dance drama), stone and wood carving, painting, and ceremonial textile weaving are famously resistant to outsiders' understanding and interpretation. As anthropologist James Boon and historian Adrian Vickers have asserted,¹⁵ there is a seductive, Orientalist romance of Bali for many Westerners. This is often accompanied by touristic imageries of the island as a tropical paradise—one filled with curvaceous bare-shouldered young female dancers, steamy volcanoes, exotic temples, and remarkably intense artistic activity. Bali's artfulness, so to speak, is indeed a central part of this discourse of exoticism and Asian paradisiacal spaces. These overheated stereotypes cloak the island in layers of gauzy platitudes about Balinese cultural and aesthetic "ancientness," "uniqueness," and "excellence." Skeptics of these clichés, we wanted to use our fieldwork encounters with east Balinese weaving communities to help Holy Cross communities see beyond the stereotypes and to glimpse some of the images' social origins.

These clichéd imageries are part of a mystique of Bali that has many contentious authors. Among these are Balinese artists and arts promoters, the local and international tourism industry, some international artists and musicians smitten with Bali, and, for sure, some among the generations of many writers and scholars who have published works about this alluring place. We designed our fieldwork, our catalogue, and our hallway exhibition so as to counter some of the more misguided clichés and to uncover some of the political economy of their social construction. We sought to help readers and visitors see beyond the artificial shell of Bali as tourist heaven and arts exemplar. That we were attempting to do this through field research and museum curatorship that itself focused directly on Balinese art made our task especially challenging. But, journeys to Asia demand that.

We did our work in the spirit of early Jesuit mutuality in encountering other cultures with respect and care. This proved to be an exhilarating way to think about Jesuit heritage as it

can translate into current-day pedagogy and faculty/student research in anthropology and Asian Studies. We first give a short account of some of the extensive scholarship on Indonesian textiles in village contexts and within international museum imaginaries and art collecting worlds. We then provide background on some of the conventional scholarship on *geringsing*. Following this we move to a discussion of our fieldwork in east Bali, as it upended some of those assumptions from the scholarly literature for us. Cumella's voice as the student researcher is preeminent in that section. Rodgers follows up with a discussion of our hallway exhibition design, as we tailored that to the new truths about *geringsing* that had emerged from our eye-opening fieldwork experiences. We deploy our conclusion to suggest several ways that Asian arts-focused projects of this liberal arts sort can give new form to older Ignatian insights about encountering other societies and their imaginative worlds.

***Geringsing* in Bali and in International Art Worlds: Background**

In the United States, hand-produced textiles are often considered to be craft, not art. That distinction can work to the detriment of cloth in American public hierarchies of aesthetic excellence. Fabrics made on hand looms as well as quilts, embroideries, and knitted or crocheted objects are also often associated in this country with women as primary producers and users. This also has status consequences in the United States: an assumption that "textile work" is lowly women's work and not fine art by masters. Not so, for any of these points, for handcrafted ceremonial textiles in Southeast Asia.¹⁶

There, in both island and mainland societies in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, hand-produced special textiles for ritual costumes and ceremonial displays often enjoy extremely high social and aesthetic luster. In Southeast Asia textiles act as public tokens of wealth, as royal icons, and as indispensable objects of marriage exchange said to enhance fertility and family accord. Southeast Asian textiles also serve as important prayer or meditation aids, particularly in Buddhist communities. Special cloths also usher the human person from one stage of life to the

next and accompany the dead to the next world. Ritual fabrics, further, also work as key, Durkheimian public representations of cosmic and social order. An example of this would be east Bali's own *geringsing*, whose Mandala-like motifs replicate the imagined order of the idealized Tenganan village and the macrocosmic structure of the surrounding universe itself. In other words, in Southeast Asian societies outside the internationalized sector, handloomed textiles carry immense social and religious weight.

Their beauty and hand-production demands are highly regarded. In fact, a case can be made that special textiles along with stone sculptures and temple architectures are the core Southeast Asian arts. As well, women's close association with dyeing and design work for cloth and with weaving on looms is emblematic of the feminine's relatively high status in these societies. Some of this derives from Southeast Asian cloth's imagined connections to pregnancy and fecundity.

The place of hand-loomed cloths in marriage exchange within numerous eastern Indonesian societies illustrates many of these assumptions about fabric and fertility power.¹⁷ This range of societies often has village political systems that involve hierarchically ranked wife-giving houses and their partners, wife-receiving houses. The givers are the superior side. They provide their indebted, lower status partner houses with young women as brides (the givers' daughters) and with flows of luck and fertility in each generation. The wife-giver houses also bestow elaborate cloth gifts on the bridegroom's house; these fabrics accompany brides on their marriage journeys to their husbands' homes and "carry luck and fertility" into the new marriage.

Coursing back in the opposite direction toward the bride's natal house are paired counter gifts from the bridegroom's kin. These often take the form of metal goods such as weapons and ornaments,¹⁸ livestock, and labor services for the bride's father's kin. The balanced exchange of such gifts and counter gifts over the generations is said to empower marriages and make them fertile. The flows of gifts are gendered. Cloth (a feminine good, woven by women's hands) is counterbalanced and empowered by metal (a masculine good, smelted and forged by men), to

form a pair of charged complementary opposites. Out of such unions, such two-in-one pairings, come good things in the world: babies, new generations of livestock, crops in the field, and peaceful social order in villages.

Cloth also instantiates gender in this range of eastern Indonesian societies in other ways. A fetus is said to be woven in the womb as a new ikat is woven on the loom.¹⁹ A new ikat textile is cut off the loom with the same sort of knife employed to cut a newborn's umbilical cord. The rounded dyepot is womb-like; threads there soak up color from the dyes, much as a growing fetus develops in a mother's body. An early miscarriage can be explained to a young wife as a situation in which the threads of the fetus did not soak up the dyes in the womb. Older women past menopause are spiritually strong enough to handle the dangerous forces of life creation. Thus, they are the appropriate ones to serve as both midwives and dyepot tenders. They also are the ones to prepare the dead for burial. They have the spiritual strength to come near to dead bodies without perishing, much as they can draw near the putrid, smelly, death-stink dyepot full of fermenting indigo leaves. The cloths arts are life and death arts.

Indonesian societies that have more wealth, more political stratification, and longer term international contacts than these small-scale eastern Indonesian polities tend to have different textile regimes than these. For instance, rich Muslim mercantile states such as those that thrived in the pepper-producing regions of south Sumatra in early Dutch colonial times produce elaborate *songket* finery for the powerful.²⁰ Songket, influenced by the long distance trade with north India from the 1400s, is a luxury fabric made of silk or fine cotton that has gold-wrapped threads added in as supplementary wefts (**Figure 8**). This sort of transnational, sumptuous cloth is tied much more to sultans' courts, Islam, and merchant family wealth than to village-level marriage alliance exchange and gender ideologies of the eastern Indonesian sort, described above. Java's batik, a royal court fabric once restricted by motif and color to the nobility, is another cloth associated with traditional Indonesian states. Court batik drew on older north Javanese village

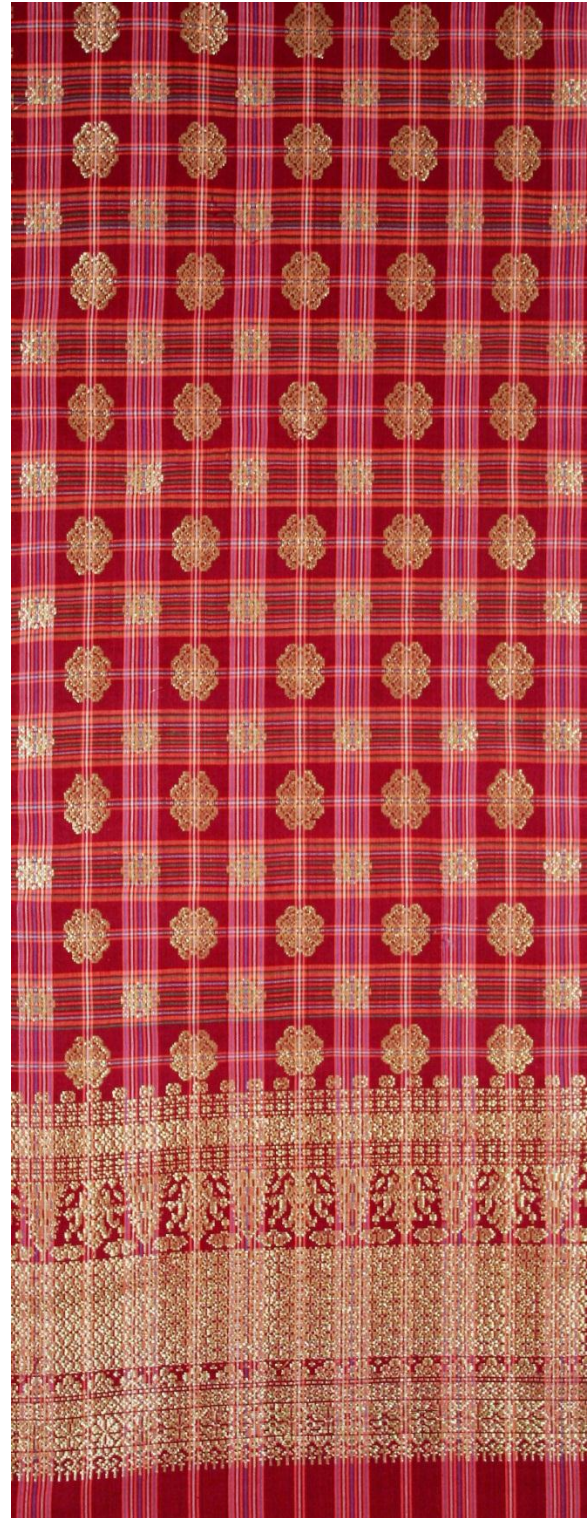


Figure 8. A songket, a cloth decorated with gold-wrapped threads added in as supplementary wefts. This plaid songket is from the Fikri shop in Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia, 2006. Palembang songket have many similarities to Malaysian songket.



Figure 9. Javanese batik, which is today both a ceremonial good and a fashion item. These trousers are readily available in markets in cities like Yogyakarta.

dyeing traditions. By the early 20th century batik was also being produced by businesses for much wider markets throughout the Indies (**Figure 9**). A degree of mechanization was present by the 1800s, through the use of pattern stamps to apply the wax to make batik's motifs. Today batik is today a thoroughly globalized textile, produced in factories as cheap yard goods. Some hand-drawn, hand-waxed batik is still made, however.

It should be noted that East Bali's geringsing cloth resists any neat ideal categorization as any one clear-cut type of Southeast Asian textile. That is, geringsing is at once a village-produced cloth made of handspun cotton and natural dyes (and thus, a rustic product), *and* a royal court status icon—*and* an exchange item that works as a ritual protective device for families throughout Bali. In addition, as noted, geringsing is also a high stakes collectible in international art circles. This has been the case since the early 20th century, when Bali's royal courts were finally all subdued by the Dutch military for the colonial state.

Restricted production of this unusual double ikat textile and the constant demand for it by Balinese

families for rites of passage keep the price of geringsing artificially high, especially for a cotton cloth. Antique geringsing bought at international auction can cost thousands of dollars, while the smallest, simplest contemporary geringsing rarely retails for less than U.S. \$100.00. Other types of hand produced Indonesian ikat are generally much cheaper.

Today geringsing are living cloths that are woven in some abundance in the Tenganan villages. Two important uses are as dance cloaks (in Tenganan's own annual round of key village "order restoring" rituals) and as magical protective devices used during teeth filing ceremonies for adolescents. These rites of passage occur throughout Bali. These ceremonies are seen as highly dangerous for the initiates, girls and boys who are being ushered into marriageable adulthood, into the life of love. The initiate's head rests on a pillow covered with a geringsing for this ceremonial transition; the cloth casts back evil and protects adolescents from harm and ritual pollution. Geringsing are also used as healing cloths. A few clippings of fringe plunged into a vessel of holy water can help restore health for patients where biomedicine has failed (some families and geringsing merchants claim).

As this is a ritual fabric, every step of its hand production is hemmed in with rules and taboos, not surprisingly. Geringsing may only be produced in the Tenganan villages; older women dyer/designers receive their color patterns from ancestors, sometimes in dreams (**Figure 10**). Outsiders may not know all the details of geringsing dyework, for fear that the cloth's magic powers might dissipate. The work of weaving the prepared threads on the loom is somewhat less fraught and has lower status. Recently married Tenganan women may weave, but only much more accomplished older women may do the actual design work for the placement of the ikat ties.

This ideology of exclusivity and sacred, gendered power in cloth exists in some tension with the Tenganan villages' current-day status as tourist destinations for a discerning arts heritage clientele. Tourist visitors to the Tenganan settlements are generally older and wealthier than the Kuta beach



Figure 10. Master dyer Ni Ketut Rentig holding the carefully dyed and patterned threads for making geringsing. These are esoteric, secret processes known to older women specialists.

crowd of Australian spring breakers, who populate the once-over-lightly “Bali highlights” tours that go to temples, rice paddies, monkey forests, and mystic caves. The Tenganan trek tends to be for visitors on their second or third trip to Bali, intent on cultural enrichment and not just beer and beaches.

The Tenganan village cluster enjoys unusual status as one of the home areas for the Bali Aga people, as mentioned. This also has a textile dimension. Not all residents of the geringsing producing villages are Bali Aga but the cloth is touted by many as a distinct icon for Bali Aga heritage. This conceit inflates the cloth’s price still further.

Bali Aga elites are supposed to marry only within their home village. The men are not allowed to spend nights away from the village on trips, although they can make short sorties to places like the capital of Den Pasar. Bali Aga elders claim that their rituals maintain village and also cosmic order by cleansing the world of evil. They don geringsing to do this. In motif structure, the geringsing cloths also act as textiles of balance within this system. With their carefully coordinated and highly standardized hues of red, black, and tan, the cloths re-present world order for wearers and onlookers. It is jarring, then, to

discover that geringsing textiles are also hawked to visiting busloads of heritage tourists every day of the week. This market scene dominates daylight life in the main village of Tenganan Pegeringsingan.

In our fieldwork, we spent most of our time in that village’s junior cousin, a smaller settlement called Tenganan Dauh Tukad. The elders there (not all Bali Aga by any means) have sought to control tourism’s impact by outlawing the construction of shops inside the village. Visitors must enter the actual house compounds to learn about geringsing and possibly to negotiate a purchase. In addition, each visitor to Tenganan Dauh Tukad is assigned a lamprey-like tour guide for the day as soon as their vehicle pulls up in the village parking lot. No tourists or visitors of any sort are allowed to stay overnight in Tenganan Dauh Tukad. Because of this we resided in a hotel in nearby Candidasa—a seaside tourist resort. Therein lies a tale. We turn now to our fieldwork experiences, in these two, linked locales.

Fieldwork in and Near Tenganan Dauh Tukad: A Recent Graduate’s Perspective

At the crack of dawn on July 4, 2010, Robin Cumella, laden with luggage, stood in front of Holy Cross’ O’Kane Hall clock tower awaiting the sight of Professor Susan Rodgers’ dark green Toyota Camry. Rodgers had come to bring the two to their meeting place to pick up the shared van to Logan airport in Boston. The day had finally arrived when they would set out on their joint expedition to Bali, Indonesia, to study textiles, of all things. Cumella, an English major, had recently returned from five months of studying Chinese intensively in Beijing, but had never been to Bali, let alone Indonesia. As she caught herself dozing off from a caffeine “under-dose,” she realized how little she actually knew even given four weeks of reading of the scholarship on Indonesian textiles and some initial examination of geringsing cloth in the Holy Cross study collection. A student of Mandarin, she knew it was going to be frustrating doing fieldwork in Indonesia and having to rely on Rodgers’ facility in Bahasa Indonesia, for interviews. Specifically, Cumella knew zero words of Balinese and perhaps two words of Bahasa Indonesia; she had only discovered what makes a double ikat a double ikat

weeks earlier. She also did not know at this point that she would find a giant gecko in her hotel room in Candidasa, or that the airline would lose all her luggage on the last leg of her journey home. What *was* she getting herself into?

While one might initially think that Cumella's lack of expertise in Indonesian studies would be totally debilitating in such a research project, we contend that her novice background afforded some unexpected benefits in this anthropological fieldwork sojourn, which demanded an open-minded approach at every turn. Truly, Cumella's relative *lack* of preconceived judgments about Balinese textiles enabled her to make rich fieldwork discoveries which not even the art historical experts have made. Indeed, many of Rodgers' and Cumella's most illuminating discoveries were made outside of the frameworks used in such classic studies as *Balinese Textiles*.

An example will show this. Early on in their study Rodgers and Cumella did initial interviews with geringsing brokers in Tenganan Dauh Tukad and then moved to a hotel in seaside Candidasa. This resort town was just seven kilometers from the Tenganan villages, so Rodgers and Cumella could easily travel there each day by rented car (with a driver—who sometimes turned out to be a personal tour guide, Pak Kadek. Our status as potential customers interested in buying several geringsing helped make the heart grow fonder).

Our official fieldwork interviews in Tenganan Dauh Tukad were going well. On one sweltering July afternoon in Candidasa, Cumella ventured out for a walk along the main drag, in casual search of a sundress and some conversation. The road was lined with tiny tourist shops, each bursting with colorful apparel and accessories. Store clerks sat outside, fanning themselves in the heat, and rising only briefly to urge passersby to come in and take a look. Cumella, tired from formal fieldwork in Tenganan, perceived this time as an ideal opportunity to perform some "fieldwork" of her own.

For about a mile, she entered every store along the main drag, making a point of speaking to someone in each store. After breaking the ice with some friendly conversation, she asked each shopkeeper if they sold geringsing, and what they could tell

her about it. Despite having read in the standard textile literature that recently woven geringsing is dyed, designed, and sold *solely* in Tenganan, she saw no harm in double-checking the facts. What did Balinese outside of Tenganan know about geringsing? Could the experts have overlooked something?

For most of the walk, her "informants" only reinforced what she already knew from previous reading. Sometimes, their responses were rather humorous. Some decided to construct a false picture of geringsing meant to intrigue a young and rather naïve-looking "tourist." One storekeeper with widened eyes explained that the deep red dye of geringsing used to derive from human blood. She then presented a (rather cheap) textile which in no way resembled a geringsing, with a very high asking price. Cumella cooperatively played along in an effort to bring forth whatever would naturally surface with this innovative marketseller. Indeed, Cumella's efforts were not in vain.

Continuing her investigation, in one such shop (a somewhat more upscale art and antiques establishment), an informed clerk explained that geringsing is mainly woven in Tenganan. But, he added, he had a friend who lived nearby in Candidasa who made geringsing, right within walking distance of the store. He asked Cumella if she would like to meet her. Cumella was astounded, as was Rodgers back at the hotel, when Cumella later reported her findings. A day or so later, Cumella and Rodgers returned to the store, to be led across the street and down a back alley to a small row of cement block houses where the friend lived. The lane was clearly an impoverished section of town. It was also immediately apparent that the woman weaver, also a mother, rarely received visits from tourists. Nonetheless, she amicably sat down to demonstrate how she wove the geringsing (**Figure 11**). What the clerk had revealed about his friend was absolutely true. Rodgers casually asked her a few questions in Indonesian – was she from Tenganan? Did she tie and dye the geringsing pattern herself? On both counts, the answer was no. Indeed, she never spoke about geringsing's magical healing properties, but limited her speech to the mechanical aspects of the weaving process, which



Figure 11. This woman is weaving geringsing on a piecework basis, not in the Tenganan villages but in the resort town of Candidasa. She weaves on the porch to her modest home in a back lane there.

is itself a complex and challenging art. The discovery was monumental for us – the weaving of geringsing, despite its claimed sacredness and geographical exclusivity, is in at least one case being brokered out to talented weavers outside of Tenganan, who weave on a piecework basis. Geringsing was being commercialized in profound ways, with bosses and dependent piecework laborers producing the cloth. The standard scholarship had not documented this.

On the same afternoon walk, Cumella and Rodgers discovered the Tiara Art Shop, a store in Candidasa owned by Tenganan women (**Figure 12**). Geringsing was sold in this shop, along with some other textiles from eastern Indonesian and baskets from the nearby island of Lombok. The shop's exterior was unassuming, and its clerks warm and gracious. Just one month earlier, the owner, Ibu Wy Dirasti, had made the decision (she told us in Indonesian) to open the shop in her daughter's name out of financial concern for the young woman's well-being. (Her daughter was an unemployed university graduate, with a new baby.) Ibu Wy Dirasti confided that thus far, the store had not made much profit at all and, as a result, was really on a trial run. She, like us, was undoubtedly aware that it is unorthodox for anyone from Tenganan, especially a woman, to own and run a shop selling geringsing *outside* of Tenganan. (In more formal fieldwork, Rodgers and Cumella would discover that men generally sell geringsing, while women design and weave.)

Truly, this Candidasa business venture was revolutionary. Ibu Wy Dirasti did not express concern for how other villagers would interpret her leaving the village to sell geringsing because she also had a store where she sold the special cloth back in Tenganan. Rodgers and Cumella purchased one geringsing from Ibu Wy Dirasti and her daughter to add to Holy Cross' Cantor Art Gallery study collection. They also bought a fine Lio textile, from central Flores. Each of these pieces was displayed in the 2011 hallway exhibition. Ibu Wy Dirasti exclaimed that this was the first major purchase made at her new shop and that the profits would allow her to subsidize her niece's trip to see family in Jakarta, scheduled for the very next day. Rodgers and Cumella had not expected to be caught up in family economic dynamics to this degree, to say the least.

A couple weeks later, on what is best described as a smoldering afternoon in late July, Cumella once again set out to perform some unconventional "fieldwork." With a soft-spoken Balinese driver



Figure 12. Ibu Wy Dirasti and her daughter and niece in their new textile shop in the resort town of Candidasa, July 2010. Ibu Wy Dirasti opened the Tiara Art Shop to market geringsing outside the weaving villages, to help support younger family members.



Figure 13. Ritual procession in Tenganan Dauh Tukad as part of a ceremony with multiple audiences: spirits, tourists invited to the event, and residents of the village. July 2010.

as her escort, she made a donation before entering Tenganan, all the while praying that her unsettled stomach would settle long enough to last through the afternoon. She was one of a swarm of tourists in Tenganan on this day, for today the village widely advertised its annual fighting ceremony (**Figure 13**), a mock-combat ceremony in which all men of the village “fought” one another by rubbing lontar palms against each another’s backs, often until the skin broke and bled. The afternoon was an exercise in tourist participant-observation for Cumella and yielded insights about *geringsing* and the tourist gaze.

The men of the village were dressed in layers of *geringsing*, and walked in procession while the hordes of tourists snapped pictures and cheered. The village, with its narrow lanes normally filled with chickens, dogs, and residents, was askew with over-eager tourist groups and oddities such as balloon stands and ice cream vendors. A ritual of tradition felt instead more like a cross between a circus and some kind of odd performance of “otherness.” One scene showed this clearly. The

women of the village, dressed in elaborate garb, stood along a village meetinghouse with their cell phones and cameras on hand-- snapping pictures of their husbands and brothers as the men jovially took turns “fighting.” There, villagers were touristic themselves for this moment, much as some of the international visitors there for the ritual event played “Tenganan villager,” via costume use of textiles.

As Cumella struggled in the throngs to take pictures of her own to capture the fighting, her attention’s focus rapidly switched from the men and women of the village to the international tourists themselves. There were numerous non-Indonesian women dressed lavishly in Indonesian textiles of all sorts, clearly proud to be wearing “authentic” garb for this unusual ritual event. Some tourists crossed the line between taking pictures of the ceremony and actually thrusting themselves into the central stage, all apparently for the sake of a vacation memento to flaunt to their friends and families back home.

The ceremony bristled with claims and counter-claims about authenticity, as the men “fighting” in the ceremony catered their “fights” more to the audience’s cheering and to their wives’ cameras than to any “tradition” on display. The afternoon was not wasted. Cumella saw a village struggling to maintain tradition and authenticity in light of a tourist-driven economy. Considerable creative imagination was being expended in the process of such tradition-making by all parties to this ritual event. *Geringsing* costumes figured at every level of the mock-combat’s action.

This is the Tenganan world of the indigo *geringsing*, mentioned above. This was a *geringsing* which truly deviates from tradition and shows that that notion is highly unstable, not to mention extremely creative. From the very first visit Cumella and Rodgers made to Pak Kadek and his wife in their house compound and weaving pavilion in Tenganan Dauh Tukad, the indigo *geringsing* was a key player (**Figure 14**). Pak Kadek, a charismatic entrepreneur and jack of all trades, is a prominent local culture expert. He makes lontar palm calendars for sale to tourists, organizes jungle treks for the adventurous, and leads cultural heritage tours of the Tenganan settlements. From the start of his interaction with

Rodgers and Cumella, he knew that that the two were interested in *geringsing*. He would thus keenly pull out large plastic storage boxes filled with his and his wife's collection of excellent *geringsing*. As his wife sat quietly on the side, he whipped out *geringsing* after *geringsing* (again, see Figure 1), pointing out motifs and other defining features, all the while acting as a model by demonstrating how they could be worn. Cumella and Rodgers, having only ever read of and seen the traditional red, black, and tan *geringsing* (each color symbolizing a Hindu god), were baffled when Pak Kadek displayed several (gorgeous) indigo and white *geringsing*. Were these really *geringsing*? Rodgers and Cumella wondered to themselves.

On subsequent visits to Pak Kadek and his wife, Cumella was especially intrigued to learn more about the indigo *geringsing*. Luckily, she pushed Rodgers to purchase one for the Holy Cross study



Figure 14. Pak Kadek holding the indigo dyed “*geringsing*” we purchased for the Holy Cross exhibition, Tenganan Dauh Tukad, July 2010.

collection and for the exhibition. Pak Kadek, pleased to be speaking with “tourists” who had a respectful appreciation for *geringsing*’s history, explained that the indigo *geringsing* had only emerged within the last fifty years or so. Not only were its colors unprecedented, he told his visitors: so were its motifs. Whereas traditional *geringsing* portray Mandala “world plan” motifs or figures of the shadow puppet genre, the indigo *geringsing* portrayed Cili, the rice goddess, who is a Balinese symbol of fertility. Rodgers and Cumella were stunned: no such motif has shown up in any of the published scholarship on the supposedly highly conventionalized *geringsing*.

Additionally, the blue textiles were significantly more expensive than their more traditional counterparts (double their price, for a small one like that shown in the photograph). Pak Kadek explained the higher price (to what were clearly potential customers) by noting that only one family in the area was willing to perform the indigo dye-work, presumably because there could be some risk involved with altering an art so steeped in tradition. He informed us that his wife is careful not to weave too many indigo *geringsing*, because doing so could ‘change one’s luck.’ It is worth noting that the only woman in Tenganan who ties designs for the indigo *geringsing* was from Banjar Pande, a neighborhood of families exiled from the core sections of Tenganan. Pak Kadek did not explain much further, but did mention that the indigo *geringsing* has some magical powers, as it is used in some ceremonies. Upon being questioned in a later interview, however (Rodgers and Cumella kept coming back to indigo cloth issues), he admitted that the indigo *geringsing* does not have healing powers.

The indigo *geringsing*’s lack of healing powers, we contend now, is key in understanding why it is in such low demand. Pak Kadek admitted that he had sold very few blue Rice Goddess *geringsing* over the years (he was jubilant at our purchase). Presumably, the indigo *geringsing* was born in light of tourist textile demand for a greater variety of colors and patterns. Sumbanese ikat cloths with animal figures, skull trees, and spirits are extremely popular among tourists; perhaps Pak Kadek and other advocates of the new Cili *geringsing* sought to penetrate that same market.

Yet, what these geringsing designers and weavers neglected to realize is that the geringsing's market is primarily Balinese families desiring a textile which is sacred and possesses mysterious healing and protective properties.

Later on, when Cumella again walked along Candidasa's main road, countless storekeepers provided a rather laymen's translation of geringsing to her. They would often say, in tourist come-on tones, that "'Gering' means 'sick', and 'sing' means 'no.'" In other words, the geringsing's healing powers are integral to its essence. Without those powers, the geringsing is demoted from its status as a miraculous, living being to serving as a mere artistic marvel. Families looking to invest in a sacred textile want a sacred textile, while tourists looking for a dazzling Indonesian textile can purchase something eye-catching and full of lively motifs—but for one-eighth of the indigo geringsing's price. Cumella and Rodgers, fascinated by such radical divergence in a textile of "ancient roots," saw the purchase of such a piece as vital to their hallway exhibition.

Displaying Balinese Arts: Exhibition Design Decisions

In working with Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery director Roger Hankins to design and physically set up our spring 2011 hallway exhibition "Geringsing in Transition: A Balinese Textile on the Move" we sought at every turn to de-mythologize Bali.²¹ By emphasizing the commercial contexts of contemporary geringsing production and local interpretation as we discovered these through our fieldwork, we tried to shift visitors' gaze from the powerful mystique of Bali as a bastion of ancient art forms to geringsing cultures as they exist in the here-and-now of today's Tenganan settlements and in Candidasa, that resort town so obviously full of hawkers and hardscrabble new art shop businesses. And, since our fieldwork uncovered dimensions of women's lives in the geringsing trade, we also highlighted their voices to the extent possible in a very small exhibition.

As shown in Figure 7 above and also in **Figure 15**, the exhibition consisted of clusters of fieldwork photographs from our July 2010 Bali



Figure 15. View of the "Geringsing in Transition" hallway exhibition, as visitors first enter the hall.

journey, plexiglass cases containing textiles, and brief wall texts. We forefronted the fieldwork photographs to a large extent and included 38 of them. They ranged in topic from village scenes from the Tenganan settlements to street scenes from Candidasa, to detailed, close up photographs of all stages of the *geringsing* production process. Other vitally important images documented the *geringsing* trade in shops in Tenganan Pegeringsingan, Tenganan Dauh Tukad, and Candidasa. We showed pictures of Cumella interviewing Pak Kadek. Several photographs illustrated another shop scene, in the arts town of Ubud: interior shots of the Threads of Life establishment, an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that provides microfinance loans to home weavers throughout eastern Indonesia. This NGO urges their partner weavers to use homespun as opposed to factory-made thread and to stick to natural dyes, in contrast to readily available aniline dyes. The resultant “natural made” ikats are then marketed by Threads of Life to an upscale international clientele and a large portion of the profits are returned to the individual weavers. We displayed a sample ikat from a weaver living in East Sumba, along with a photograph of the weaver that we were given by a Threads of Life staff person, after we had purchased the cloth for the study collection. In walking tours when we arrived at this part of the exhibition, we summarized our interviews at Threads of Life in detail and pointed out some of the power dynamics found in international NGOs doing textile work with “local weaver women” in impoverished areas of Asia.

The exhibition displayed fourteen textiles: five standard-color *geringsing* (small banners, produced for the tourist and minor-collector trade); the indigo blue newfangled *geringsing* that so captured our imagination in our fieldwork; the Threads of Life small indigo ikat along with a large indigo dyed sarong with elephant motifs from Flores (we placed these near each other to allow comparison among the blue cloths); four housewares type of single ikat *endek* cloth, from the Sidemen area of east Bali; and, directly at the start of the exhibition as visitors entered the hall, a magnificent double ikat silk *patola* from north India. Part of the study collection, this *patola* dates to about 1790 and is filled with vibrant marching animals in royal procession. We knew

that our visitors probably would not know what double ikat was as a cloth production technique, so by positioning this eye-catching, glimmering *patola* at the entryway to the display, wall texts could explain the dyeing and weaving conventions while people enjoyed the sheer visual beauty of this striking cloth. Photographs set on the wall above the *patola* illustrated how the threads were tied into patterns early in the double ikat process.

We structured the flow of objects, images, and wall texts to highlight our most important and sometimes most unexpected fieldwork findings, noted above. For instance, the first photograph that visitors would see as they walked into the hallway was an image of Pak Kadek and his wife holding up one of their larger *geringsing* for us to see (and to photograph). Again, please see Figure 1. Directly under that was a photograph that Cumella took during the July 2010 mock-combat ritual described above. This picture showed Tenganan young women walking along in a ritual procession attired in *geringsing* from chest to ankle. In the accompanying wall text and in every walking tour we gave, Cumella would deconstruct a bit of the political and aesthetic play in evidence here. She would note, for instance, that Tenganan women themselves were among the most avid photographers of this scene, with their cell phone cameras at the ready. We wanted exhibition visitors to realize that *geringsing*-related traditions are very much being created and constantly recreated in the here and now—despite what some of the rather antiquarian scholarly literature on this textile type might have readers believe.

The different sections of the exhibition continued to explore these themes about the impact of tourism on the *geringsing* trade. Other parts of the exhibition highlighted commodification processes, seen more broadly.

After the introductory section with the *patola*, the second part of the show on that same side of the hallway concerned textiles and commerce. Spotlighted here were cloths to illustrate ways that Balinese and eastern Indonesian ikat in general have long worked in history as a single trade system, sharing motifs and dye colors. The photographs in this section also showed Ibu Wy Dirasti and her new shop in Candidasa. Gallery walk throughs and wall texts provided

ethnographic details about this bold woman's innovative and risky business enterprise. Another photograph here was that of Figure 11, the piecework laborer at her loom in the back lane in Candidasa. Talks and wall texts focused on the economic background to her worklife today.

On the opposite side of the hall as visitors arrived was a more generalized section asking "Why Textiles?" That is, why should people be interested in Asian cloth and cloth manufacture and sale in the first place? This section like all the others included some photographs of Cumella doing fieldwork. We wanted exhibition-goers to recall that the knowledge presented in the show was generated from a historically specific, concrete social scientific series of fieldwork events in Bali in 2010.

The section following this one on the same side dwelt on east Bali's single ikat cloth, called endek. This is a thoroughly, even exuberantly commercialized and totally secular cloth today. Endek thus stands in some contrast to *geringsing*. We had spent time in our fieldwork interviewing weavers and brokers in the endek-producing area, the Sidemen Valley. Themes here in the wall texts focused on ways that Bali's overall textile sector is now transforming endek into homegoods and also into high fashion (not to mention uniforms for wait staff at Bali's hotels). Endek costumes are also important in rituals but this single ikat is now taking on a new life as hotel public relations icon. We invited visitors to see this as a social institutional phenomenon and not necessarily one to regret. Women endek weavers are sometimes empowered by these new developments.

Against the back wall of the exhibition as visitors moved on down the hallway was the indigo *geringsing* under plexiglass. It was accompanied by the photograph illustrating Pak Kadek in all his glory as a heritage entrepreneur (figure 14). In wall texts and exhibition walk throughs, we emphasized the precise biographical details of Pak Kadek's promotion of this unusual rice goddess motif cloth. We tried to show visitors some of the hidden political economy traces underneath this strange and lovely blue textile. We sought to provide a biography of a cloth, to help visitors better see contemporary Asia. We aimed for encounters with the region that had a degree of

social reality to them, beyond Orientalist clichés—and we also wanted to forefront Asia's astounding artistic accomplishments in fabric work. An Ignatian openness to cultural complexity and to compelling artwork where one finds it was an inspiration.

Conclusion: Some Suggestions on Art and Asia in Jesuit Higher Education

The early Jesuits' global enterprise and their turn toward establishing schools as their prime avenue in "the help of souls" gave them a pronounced cultural agenda and interest in the creative arts, as John O'Malley writes.²² He notes, however, that "nothing in the *Formula* or in the behavior of the Jesuits at the time of the founding suggested any particular engagement with culture and the arts." The education of Ignatius and his immediate companions at the University of Paris was of exceptional quality but was "the typically clerical program that the mendicant orders had been following for several centuries."²³ O'Malley continues, "...It was a strictly academic program, altogether cerebral. It had no place for literature or, despite the name [the Arts], for the arts."²⁴ Tellingly, music was presented as an aspect of mathematical study. But, the everyday practical concerns of establishing schools following the first one in Messina, Sicily, in 1548 plunged the early companions into issues of pedagogy as that related to concrete historical and cultural environments. How could the new schools best interact with new human settings, as mission work expanded? Ignatius advocated adaptivity. He would often make concrete suggestions to missionaries working in far-off places in his letters to them, but he would often (famously) append the phrase "unless you think some other course would be more effective." He urged the mission fathers to adjust their work to "places, persons, and circumstances," as the *Constitutions* itself puts it. This all led to what eventually became the Jesuits' signature pragmatism in their work but also to their eventual huge engagement with the arts.²⁵

Over the first decades after the 1540 establishment of the order, Jesuit schools were founded at an astonishing rate. Despite the early, seeming indifference to the arts, instructors quickly found that putting on school plays

(complete with dance and song accompaniment and much student participation) enlivened the young scholars' learning a great deal. Actively *saying* the speeches of ancient Rome as opposed to simply studying them became a key aspect of Jesuit pedagogy.²⁶ The plays also helped make the Jesuit schools centers of public attention, not to mention entertainment. By 1561 theatrical training was part of Ignatian teaching. By 1565 the Jesuits were hiring first rate artists to decorate the interiors of their rapidly growing numbers of churches. Profuse creativity in sculpture and painting resulted.

In the overseas missions, pictorial images of Gospel scenes and lively song formats for teaching the catechism brought further, once again pragmatic attention to the arts as an integral part of Jesuit work. Jeronimo Nadal was commissioned to create the soon-famous *Evangelicae historiae imagines* in the early 1570s; these detailed images of Gospel events and stories were printed in Antwerp in 1593 and reprinted the same year and also in 1607.²⁷ Nadal's illustrations were carried along by Jesuit missionaries to many corners of the world. They were used to help potential converts imagine the life and mission of Jesus. Beyond evangelization, however, these prints also had a strong impact on indigenous art and artists. The Jesuits established an art academy in Japan in 1583, to teach Western drawing and painting techniques to Japanese students. Interaction with Japanese art itself was synergistic—a typical pattern around the early Jesuit missions worldwide. Francis Xavier himself carried an illustrated Bible to Japan, doubtless in part as an evangelization device but more, a means of rich cultural contact.


As Juan Plazaola Artola, S.J. has written, for the early Jesuits art was not only a medium through which to encounter, influence, and convert peoples worldwide as the missions expanded: creativity itself was central to Jesuit spirituality.²⁸ The Spiritual Exercises themselves focus to a remarkable extent on the creative imagination, as those pursuing the Exercises are urged by directors to conjure up concrete, exquisitely detailed pictures in their interior selves of Gospel events in the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. An order “on the move” toward international mission, one reliant on art as an evangelical

medium, the early Jesuits also went on interior journeys, again relying deeply on what can certainly be termed aesthetic creativity. In practice the Jesuits had moved far away from their early indifference to art.

Pragmatists to the core, the early Jesuit missionaries to places like India, China, Japan, and the Indies also fostered a self-conscious openness to changing their methodologies in order to best discover and react to foreign conceptual and social realities. Again Ignatius's own advice that one should adjust one's strategies for engaging the world was key here. In Asia, encounters with communities turned on careful local language study, conversation with new friends and converts, and a ready acknowledgement that “the local” had something profound to contribute to the richness of the world, itself seen as a manifestation of God.

Taken in tandem with anthropological scholarship about Balinese art, these early Jesuit insights about art and “going to Asia” inspired our own fieldwork and museum curatorial work about contemporary Balinese textile art. We began our project suspecting that *geringsing* technical production but also *geringsing* aesthetics in larger senses were absolutely central to social life and social ideology in the Tenganan villages. We found this to be true. But, our unexpected discoveries about links between trade and textile creativity and changes, via our in-person, ethnographic encounters with weavers and sellers, gave us more accurate ways of writing about Balinese textile art and displaying it for American college publics.

In our design work for the Holy Cross hallway exhibition, we forefronted these aspects of *geringsing* and commercial life. In so doing, we believe we gave exhibition visitors increased access to Bali as it is, as opposed to the exoticized Bali's of the Western imagination. Ironically enough—since postcolonial scholarship so often characterizes European-based Christian missions and missionaries as agents of imperialism, full stop—Jesuit ideas about the importance of art, the need to remain flexible in journeys to Asia, and the possibilities of mutuality in cultural encounters with people in that region allowed Holy Cross some small discursive space to go beyond Orientalist images of Bali.

Our 2010-2011 project suggests one way for faculty and students in Jesuit higher education to translate Ignatian and early Jesuit insights about art and culture into practice, in concrete curricula. Actual, hands-on fieldwork in Asia and not just library study can yield personal development but also surprising new fieldwork discoveries. The sort of close faculty mentorship of student research that this entails enriches both scholarship and participants. Aspects of Asian economic change can be brought to light through, of all things, exhibitions and lectures about Asian art. Joint museum curatorship, tailored to bringing complex, hidden aspects of today's Asian art to broad publics, can spark new curiosity about the international world-- and new humility in the face of Asia's profound aesthetic accomplishments. 

Notes

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² There is a burgeoning literature on the early Jesuits and the arts. An especially rewarding text is John W. O'Malley S.J., Gauvin Alexander Bailey, and Giovanni Sale, S.J., eds., *The*

Jesuits and the Arts, 1540-1773 (Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2005). See especially John W. O'Malley's essay there, "Saint Ignatius and the Cultural Mission of the Society of Jesus," 1-26. Also excellent are Ramon Gutierrez and Graciela Maria Vinuales, "The Artistic and Architectural Legacy of the Jesuits in Spanish America," 269-310, and Gauvin Alexander Bailey's "Jesuit Art and Architecture in Asia," 311-360. Bailey has contributed a number of pioneering studies, in fact; see his *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); *The Andean Hybrid Baroque: Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); and *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). Foundational surveys are Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris, John W. O'Malley, and T. Frank Kennedy, ed., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, Vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), and John W. O'Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy, ed., *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, Vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006). Additional sources are discussed in the Conclusion to this essay, below.

³ John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁴ There is also a large and rewarding literature on the Jesuits' early years and their turn toward establishing schools. O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* is a superb overview survey; see also his "How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education," in George W. Traub, S.J., ed., *A Jesuit Education Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 43-62. In Traub, see also the section on Ignatian/Jesuit pedagogy, 272-335. Essays in, Thomas Worcester, S.J., ed. *Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) afford detailed historical background information. Also useful are John Patrick Donnelly, ed., *Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period: 1540-1640* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006) and Kathleen M. Comerford and Hilmar Pabel, eds., *Early Modern Catholicism: Essays in Honor of John W. O'Malley, S.J.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁵ John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 78.

⁶ The extraordinary Fr. Matteo Ricci and his robust mission to China have been the subject of many studies. An excellent critical biography is R. Po-Chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci, 1552-1610* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Also astute is Liam Matthew Brockery, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008). Another useful volume is David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, HA: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989). Especially insightful on the dialogical relationship between the Jesuits and Chinese elites is Andrew C. Ross's *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003). For fascinating discussion of how the early Jesuits offered the court secret and apparently effective mnemonic strategies, see Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New

York: Penguin, 1985). For attention to how the senses acted within these cultural encounters, see Mary Laven, *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011). For an insightful analysis of how Jesuit mission encounters with Asian societies sometimes resulted in systematic *misunderstanding* [and systematic strategizing] on both sides, see Vincente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Transition and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), on the early Jesuits in the Philippines.

⁷ Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publishing, 2008).

⁸ Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in his *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 412-454. Geertz's *Negara: The Theatre State in 19th Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980) is a core source in understanding Balinese ritual life.

⁹ Most of Rodgers's work concerns Sumatran peoples, especially the Angkola Batak. See, for instance, Susan Rodgers, *Telling Lives, Telling History: Autobiography and Historical Imagination in Modern Indonesia* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1995); *Sitti Djaerah: A Novel of Colonial Indonesia*, Monograph no. 15 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1997); *Print, Poetics and Politics: A Sumatran Epic in the Colonial Indies and New Order Indonesia* (Leiden, the Netherlands: KITLV Press, 2005). On interdisciplinary approaches to Catholic ritual worldwide, see Bruce Morrill, S.J., Joanna E. Ziegler, and Susan Rodgers, ed., *Practicing Catholic: Ritual, Body, and Contestation in Catholic Faith* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006).

¹⁰ The best and most comprehensive study of traditional cloth in Bali is Brigitta Hauser-Schaublin, et al., *Balinese Textiles* (London: British Museum Press, 1991). The illustrations are spectacular. See especially the chapter on *geringsing* by Urs Ramseyer in that volume, Chapter 9, "Geringsing: Magical Protection and Communal Identity," pp. 116-135. Also insightful as background is Brigitta Hauser-Schaublin, *Traces of Gods and Men: Temples and Rituals as Landmarks of Social Events and Processes in a South Bali Village* (Berlin: D. Reiner Verlag, 1997). Natasha Reichle's *Bali: Art, Ritual, Performance* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2011) sketches out the ceremonial context for multiple Balinese arts. Urs Ramseyer's *The Theatre of the Universe: Ritual and Art in Tenganan Pegeringsingan* provides insightful material on the village's local interpretations as a cosmos writ small (Basel: Museum der Kulturen, 2009).

¹¹ Arjun Appadurai's work is crucially important here for interrogating culture and cultures, within discourses about the modern. See especially his *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and his *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 1988). See also the essays in Fred Myers, ed., *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, Advanced Seminar Series (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, School of American Research, 2001). Two fine studies of

Indonesian "ethnic arts" executed within these theoretical frameworks and also in relation to critical tourism research are Kathleen Adams, *Art as Politics: Re-Crafting Identities, Tourism, and Power in Tana Toraja, Indonesia* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006) and Andrew Causey, *Hard Bargaining in Sumatra: Western Travelers and Toba Bataks in the Marketplace of Souvenirs* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003). A classic volume on the politics of museum representation is Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, ed., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1991). Essays in Shelly Errington's *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998) and Sally Price's *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) helped set the theoretical agenda for anthropology of art research on museum representation, and also the anthropology of art collecting. For Indonesian social historical context on collecting, see Reimar Schefold and Han F. Vermeulen, ed., *Treasure Hunting? Collectors and Collections of Indonesian Artefacts* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, in association with CNWS, University of Leiden, 2002).

¹² Adrian Vickers, *Bali: A Paradise Created* (Singapore: Periplus, 1990) is a critical social history of touristic Bali and also artistic Bali. See also the essays in the multidisciplinary anthology, Adrian Vickers, ed., *Being Modern in Bali* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1996). Particularly good anthropological studies of Bali with insights about how to see ritual and power there with some degree of subtlety are Margaret Wiener, *Visible and Invisible Realms: Power, Magic, and Colonial Conquest in Bali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and J. Stephen Lansing, *Perfect Order: Recognizing Complexity in Bali* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). Lansing has the special distinction of calling attention to the ecological settings of Balinese ritual. For insight about Bali in Indonesia's transition away from the 1965-1998 New Order authoritarian regime of former President Soeharto, see the essays in Thomas Reuter, ed., *Inequality, Crisis, and Social Change in Indonesia: The Muted Worlds of Bali* (New York: Routledge, 2002). On art in Bali see especially Hildred Geertz and Ida Bagus Made Togog, *Tales from a Charmed Life: A Balinese Painter Reminisces* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005). Also rewarding in its holistic approach to Balinese art is Hildred Geertz and Sandra Vitzthum, *The Life of a Balinese Temple: Artistry, Imagination, and History in a Peasant Village* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

¹³ Thomas Reuter's studies are the most close-grained. See his *Custodians of the Sacred Mountains: Culture and Society in the Highlands of Bali* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002) and *The House of our Ancestors: Precedence and Dualism in Highland Balinese Society* (Leiden, the Netherlands: KITLV Press, 2002).

¹⁴ Susan Rodgers and Robin Cumella, *Geringsing in Transition: A Balinese Textile on the Move* (Worcester, MA: Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery, College of the Holy Cross, 2011), unpublished manuscript.

¹⁵ James Boon, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali, 1597-1972: Dynamic Perspectives in Marriage and Caste, Politics and Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press). Adrian Vickers, *Bali: A Paradise Created*.

¹⁶ There is a huge literature on Indonesian textiles and about Southeast Asian textiles beyond that. Those new to that scholarship might begin with Mattiebel Gittinger, *Splendid Symbols: Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Oxford University Press); Sylvia Fraser-Lu, *Handwoven Textiles of Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990); Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, *Textile Traditions in Indonesia* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1977); Robyn Maxwell, *Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade, and Transformation*, Rev. ed. (Singapore: Periplus, 1990) and Maxwell's *Sari to Sarong: 500 Years of Indian and Indonesian Textile Exchange* (Canberra, Australia: National Gallery of Australia, 2004). More recent studies are Ruth Barnes and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, *Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles* (New York: Prestel USA, 2010); John Guy, *Indian Textiles in the East: From Southeast Asia to Japan* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009); and Jane Puranananda, *The Secrets of Southeast Asian Textiles: Myth, Status and the Supernatural* (River Books Press, 2007). For a much more general, cross-cultural, and anthropological approach to the political economies of 'traditional textiles' today, see Walter E. Little and Patricia A. McAnany, eds., *Textile Economies: Power and Value from the Local to the Transnational* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2011).

¹⁷ For anthropological studies of this sort of marriage exchange system see the essays in James J. Fox, *The Flow of Life: Essays on Eastern Indonesia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

¹⁸ For more detail on how these metal/cloth exchange systems work in various parts of Indonesia, see Susan Rodgers, *Power and Gold: Jewelry from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines* (Geneva, Switzerland: Musee Barbier Mueller, 1985).

¹⁹ A rich and evocative study of such a system of thought and action is Janet Hoskins, "Why Do Ladies Sing the Blues? Indigo Dyeing, Cloth Production, and Gender Symbolism in Kodi," in *Cloth and Human Experience*, ed. Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 141-173.

²⁰ For historical background but also case studies of living songket weaving communities today, see Susan Rodgers, Anne Summerfield, and John Summerfield, *Gold Cloths of Sumatra: Indonesia's Songkets from Ceremony to Commodity* (Worcester, MA: Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery and Leiden, the Netherlands: KITLV Press, 2007). The volume includes a bibliography on songket research. This book accompanied an exhibition of the same name at Holy Cross's Cantor Art Gallery in 2007.

²¹ For a discussion of ways that the scholarship on transnational mobilities helped structure the 2007 "Gold Cloths" exhibition at Cantor Art Gallery, see Susan Rodgers, "On Exhibiting Transnational Mobilities: Museum Display

Decisions in 'Gold Cloths of Sumatra,'" forthcoming in *Museum Anthropology* (American Anthropological Association).

²² His essay "Saint Ignatius and the Cultural Mission of the Society of Jesus," in Bailey, et al., *The Jesuits and the Arts*, pp. 1-26, is a comprehensive account of these dynamics.

²³ O'Malley, "Saint Ignatius and the Cultural Mission," 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵ Note 1, above, provides some basic sources on the Jesuits and their ties to the arts. Also helpful in sketching in the fuller picture is the section on "The Visual Arts and the Arts of Persuasion" in John O'Malley, S.J., et al., *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 109-286. In that same volume see also Part Four, "Music, Theatre, and the Uses of Performances," 451-572. Part Five, also valuable, concerns "The Overseas Missions: Challenges and Strategies," 573-678. Valuable monographs includes Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004) and Thomas M. Lucas, S.J., *Landmarking: City, Church, and Jesuit Urban Strategy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997). See also Joanna E. Ziegler, "Wonders To Behold and Skillful Seeing: Art History and the Mission Statement," in Traube, *Jesuit Education Reader*, 2008, 337-346; Ziegler sets out a way to 'translate' Jesuit spirituality into art history teaching in liberal arts colleges. She passed away last year but her inspired teaching continues to enliven arts pedagogy at Holy Cross, in multiple fields.

²⁶ John W. O'Malley, "Saint Ignatius and the Cultural Mission," 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁸ Juan Plazaola Artola, S.J., "Prologue" in O'Malley and Bailey, *The Jesuits and the Arts*, 2005, xi-xv.

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